

# **The Phonological Processes of Metathesis Words in Indonesian Slang Language Used by Jabotabek Teenagers**

Novita Chandra Dewi - 13020112130045  
Diponegoro University

## **Abstrak**

Remaja Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang dan Bekasi yang menggunakan bahasa Indonesia sebagai bahasa pertama mereka untuk percakapan sehari-hari, memodifikasi bahasa Indonesia menjadi bahasa yang dikenal dengan sebutan bahasa gaul. Bentuk dan variasi bahasa gaul ini bermacam-macam, salah satunya adalah bahasa Indonesia yang mengalami proses metatesis. Metatesis adalah proses fonologis dimana penutur mengubah posisi bunyi dalam sebuah kata. Dalam hal ini, penulis tertarik untuk menganalisis fenomena metatesis yang terjadi pada bahasa Indonesia yang digunakan oleh remaja JABOTABEK. Tujuan penulisan skripsi ini tidak hanya sekedar untuk mengetahui tipe-tipe metatesis dan proses fonologi yang terjadi pada bahasa gaul, namun juga untuk mengetahui alasan remaja-remaja JABOTABEK menggunakan variasi bahasa ini dalam berkomunikasi. Data yang digunakan merupakan kata yang mengalami proses metatesis. Metode pengambilan data menggunakan *purposive sampling* dan teori Sudaryanto metode simak yaitu observasi dan cakap. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 2 tipe metatesis yang ditemukan dalam bahasa gaul yaitu metatesis dengan membalikkan seluruh bunyi yang ada dalam satu kata yaitu dari belakang ke depan dan metatesis yang hanya memindahkan beberapa bunyi saja. Adapun prediksi sistem bahasa tentang bagaimana seseorang membentuk kata baru dengan cara metatesis. Proses fonologis yang muncul setelah kata-kata dalam bahasa Indonesia tersebut mengalami proses metatesis adalah proses menghilangkan konsonan, menambahkan konsonan, penghilangan bunyi vokal, penurunan bunyi vokal, dan netralisasi. Alasan remaja JABOTABEK menggunakan kata-kata metatesis ini adalah karena mereka tinggal di lingkungan yang juga menggunakan kata-kata tersebut dalam berkomunikasi, membuat suatu kode agar orang lain yang tidak termasuk dalam remaja JABOTABEK tidak mengerti apa yang mereka katakan dan untuk meningkatkan derajat sosial mereka menjadi remaja yang gaul.

Keywords: phonological process, metathesis, Indonesian slang language

## **1. Introduction**

Jakarta people use the Indonesian language to communicate in their daily lives. However, the teenagers, who are known as *gaul* kids by people in other regions, sometimes modify the Indonesian language structurally and phonetically. The modification of this Indonesian language is called slang. Slang is different from dialect. Dialect is a language variation that has the characteristics of the region, while slang is a social variation of language that has the same characteristics as special and secret words. According to David Crystal

(2008:168), dialect is distinguished by pronunciation, grammar or even vocabulary. Michael Adams (2009) states on his book *Slang: The People's Poetry* that slang is a playful, elliptical, and vivid vocabulary which is used between people who belong to the same group and know each other well.

This paper is about metathesis phenomenon found in Indonesian slang language used by JABOTABEK teenagers who are currently studying at Diponegoro University. Metathesis is a transposition process of letters, syllables, or even sounds in a word. The writer explains about the metathesis types found in Indonesian slang language, its phonological processes and the reasons behind this metathesis usage.

## **2. Literary Review**

Phonology is a study of sound systems and its processes involving the way on how to pronounce the words (Radford & Atkinson, 2009:5). It concerns on the sound structures in human language.

Phonological process is a process where one sound is changed when it is placed next to another sound or it is placed in certain position. In Indonesian language the [b] sound naturally becomes [p] sound when it is occurred in the final position. Thus, this process is also called as a pronunciation process. Schane (1973) states on his book entitled "Generative Phonology":

*We will organize phonological processes into four categories: assimilation, where segments become more alike; syllable structure, where there is alteration in the distribution of consonants and vowels; weakening and strengthening, where segments are modified according to their position in the word; and neutralization, where segments merge in a particular environment (Schane, 1973:49).*

### **2.1 Assimilation**

Assimilation is a phonological process where a segment influences the neighboring segment (Schane, 1973:49). It could be a consonant affects another consonant, a vowel influences the other vowel, a consonant that take on features of a vowel or vice versa.

### **2.2 Syllable Structure Processes**

Syllable structure processes deals with the distribution of consonant and vowels within the word (Schane, 1973:52). According to Schane (1973:53), there

are some processes which affect the natural words such as consonant deletion and vowel deletion where the final consonant is dropped due to some circumstances; consonant and vowel insertion where a sound is added by the speaker when producing a word; consonant coalescence where two contiguous consonants coalesce into a single one that shares the same features as the two original consonant (Schane, 1973:54); vowel coalescence where the process is simply to reduce the vowel cluster (diphthong) into a single vowel (monophthong; metathesis where interchanging the two or more segments within a word is possible (Schane, 1973:68). The term can refer to an alteration of sounds, syllables, words, sentences or it may be other units (Crystal, 2008:303).

### **2.3 Weakening and Strengthening**

The processes above lead to a simpler syllabic structure . However, not all changes in syllabic structure are the same, some other structures become more complex (Schane, 1973:57) such as the process of syncope where a vowel which closes to a stressed vowel can be deleted (Schane, 1973:57); vowel reduction where the articulation of vowels may move to a more central position when the vowels are unstressed (O’Grady, 1987:55); diphthongization where a strong vowel becomes less strong vowel.

#### **2.2.4 Neutralization**

Neutralization is a change of phonological sound because of its environment. Thus, this process involves a reduction of phonological distinction or a merger of segments in a certain environment (Schane, 1973:59).

### **2.5 Slang**

Slang is an informal language, which has seasonal nature, used by young people or particular groups for internal communication in order to make other people do not understand, whether by adding new vocabularies or changing existing words (Kridalaksana, 2000: 20). It is a way to express young people’s feelings and creativities and to make the conversation more intimate. They modify

the existing words by changing the pronunciation, grammar or even creating new vocabularies.

### **3. Data Collection and Analysis Method**

There are a lot of methods that can be used to collect data but the writer chose the suitable methods in order to find qualified data. The writer used method of collecting data from Sudaryanto (1993) on his book *Metode dan Aneka Teknik Analisis Bahasa* to get the data related to switching segment(s) types, its phonological processes, and the purposes of using it. First, the writer used Observation Method to find out the pattern of segments alteration process within a word and its phonetics innovation or phonological processes after the replacement. The observation method that the writer used is non-participant observation. Furthermore, the writer recorded the conversation to get the pronunciation of each metathesis word to answer the second research question that is the phonological process occurred. Second, the writer used Conversation Method to investigate the purpose of using this metathesis patterns in the daily conversation.

### **4. Analysis**

First, the writer found that in Indonesian slang language, there are two kinds of metatheses that are used by JABOTABEK teenagers. Second, there are some other phonological processes occurred after metathesis process. In this analysis, there are metathesis words which followed by assimilation, syllable structure change, weakening and strengthening, and neutralization process according to Schane's theory. The analysis of the process is explained on the point two. Third, there are some reasons behind the use of this metathesis process and one of them is because they want to see themselves as *gaul* kids by following trends.

#### **4.1 Type of Metathesis**

Metatheses in some languages are counted as speech error. However, the writer found that nowadays, there are a lot of phenomena of metathesis in Indonesian slang language. Metathesis used by Jakarta teenagers or even

JABOTABEK teenagers can be divided into two, complete metathesis types and partial metathesis types.

#### 4.1.1 Metathesis Type 1

Metathesis type one is the most usable type. The way of pronouncing the word by inverting the segments from behind to the front (completely invert the segments). This type one is accepted only if the replaced word can be pronounced easily. Basically, this metathesis type one is a word which has C-V-C-V structure. If the word is qualified, the speakers only invert the words and pronounce it naturally. The examples are:

Speaker A : “*Ih **ucul** banget*”.

(*lucu*)

“How cute!”

Speaker B : “Yang terakhir lo liat sih udah **sutup**”.

(*putus*)

The original words of the examples above are *lucu* (funny), and *putus* (break). The speakers naturally invert the segments because they have used it for so long so the change sounds just as usual or natural.

#### 4.1.2 Metathesis Type 2

Metathesis type 2 only switches one or more segments within a word. There are various patterns in forming the metathesis words in type two, such as some words become closed syllable, some others switch between its vowel, consonant or even syllable, and some are changed unconditionally. The examples of this type two that the writer got from the participants are:

Speaker A : “*Ya pokoknya si kapan aja bisa mo minggu depan juga*

***sabi-sabi** aja kok gapapa*”.

← syllable change

(*bisa-bisa*)

“I can join anytime even next week. It is ok, I am always available”

Speaker B : "Gausah malu-malu *kicung* ← vowel alteration  
gitu si"

The processes of the words above are:

#### Syllable change

[bɪ                      sa ]                      →                      [sa                      bɪ?]  
first syllable                      second syllable                      first syllable                      second syllable

#### Vowel alteration

[ku   c   ɪ   ]                      →                      [kɪ   c   u   ]  
V<sub>1</sub>                      V<sub>2</sub>   V<sub>1</sub>                      V<sub>2</sub>

### 4.1.3 The Prediction of the Language System

Based on the metathesis words found above, there are some patterns in forming the new way to pronounce a word. Therefore, the writer tries to make a prediction how to form a new word based on metathesis theory.

1. If the word has C-V-C-V structure, you can choose whether you want to pronounce it from behind to the front (complete metathesis' pattern), change it between its syllable or unconditionally (partial metathesis' pattern). However, all the replaced words cannot be accepted directly due to some circumstances. For example:

Word	The Changes	Note
[s      m    ] 1 2   3 4	[   m    s] 2 3 4 1 (reverse the phone from behind to the font)	The word has not have its own meaning



[skr] and [ps] in [skripsi], [rn] in [p rn h] and ect. The changing pattern of one word is different from another, so that, not all the pattern mentioned bellow is possible for every word. Moreover, the pattern that is not suitable for one word does not mean that it is cannot be used for another word. For example:

No	Word	The Changes	Note
1	[ u <b>n</b> t u k ] 1 2 3 4 5	<p>*[ k u t n u ] 5 4 3 2 1 (reverse the phones)</p> <p>[ k u n t u ] 5 4 2 3 1 (reverse the word but maintain the consonant cluster)</p> <p>[ t u k u n ] 3 4 5 1 2 (switch between syllable)</p> <p>[ n u k u t ] 2 1 5 4 3 (unconditionally)</p>	<p>It is difficult to pronounce</p> <p>The possible changes. The word has not had its own meaning yet.</p>
2	[ s <b>n</b> d l ] 1 2 3 4 5 6	<p>*[ l d n s ] 6 5 4 3 2 1 (reverse the phones)</p> <p>[ l n d s ] 6 5 3 4 2 1 (reverse the word but maintain the consonant cluster)</p> <p>[ d l s n ] 4 5 6 1 2 3 (switch between syllable)</p>	<p>It is difficult to pronounce</p> <p>The possible changes. The word has not had its own meaning.</p>



		<p>*[ <i>n</i> l s t ] 3 2 6 1 5 4 (unconditionally)</p> <p>*[ <i>n</i> s l t ] 3 2 1 6 5 4 (unconditionally)</p>	<p>} Both [ <i>n</i> l s t ] and [ <i>n</i> s l t ] are ending with [t] because [d] becomes [t] when it is occurred in the final position. Moreover, both replaced words sound weird so the writer predicts that people avoid using these ones.</p>
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Table 2

Sometimes, maintaining the consonant cluster in a word eases the speaker but in some cases it is not. Based on the examples above, maintaining the consonant cluster makes the words easy to pronounce. However, there is also a word which avoid to maintain the consonant cluster [rt] in [w rt g]. Therefore, whether or not we maintain the consonant cluster depends on the word itself.

According to the data above, if you want to make a new metathesis word, these are the conditions that must be considered:

1. The replaced word must be pronounced easily.
2. It cannot be used if there have been a word which has its own meaning (already existing word).
3. There is a possibility that other people may use the replaced word.

## 4.2 Phonological Processes

The writer finds that there are a lot of sound changes when each sound of natural and metathesis words are compared. The following table shows how the natural and metathesis words are pronounced by JABOTABEK teenagers:

No	Type	Natural Word	Metathesis Word
1	Metathesis type 1	[b s] 'boss'	[s p] 'boss'
2		[ o é] 'I'	[ e k] 'I'
3		[ u ] 'Let's go'	[k ] 'Let's go'
4		[lucu ] 'cute'	[ucul] 'cute'
5		[b t ] 'bored'	[ t p] 'bored'
6		[gıl ] 'crazy'	[alıg] 'crazy'

7		[lup ] ‘forget’	[apul] ‘forget’
8		[m k n] ‘eat’	[n k m] ‘eat’
9		[s lo ] ‘relax’	[w l s] ‘relax’
10		[putus] ‘break’	[sutup] ‘break’
11		[motor] ‘motor cycle’	[rotom] ‘motor cycle’
12		[rib t] ‘complicated’	[t bɪr] ‘complicated’
13		[bebas] ‘whatever’	[sab p] ‘whatever’
14		[j lek] ‘ugly’	[k l ] ‘ugly’
15		[panas] ‘hot’	[sanap] ‘hot’
		[t l l] ‘fool’	[l l t] ‘fool’
16		[m d l] ‘model’	[led m] ‘model’
18		[pacaran] ‘dating’	[naracap] ‘dating’
19	Metathesis Type 2	[br ] ‘brother’	[b r] ‘brother’
20		[bisa ] ‘be able’	[sabɪ] ‘able’ [sabɪʔ] ‘able’
21		[man ] ‘where’	[amn ] ‘where’
22		[ s ] ‘cool’	[sa ] ‘cool’
		[ sɪk] ‘cool’	[saɪʔ] ‘cool’
23		[balɪk] ‘leave / go home’	[bakɪl] ‘leave / go home’
24		[pusɪ ] ‘dizzy’	[ ɪsup] ‘dizzy’
25		[s m at] ‘cheer up’	[m ats ] ‘cheer up’ [m ats] ‘cheer up’
	[ba t] ‘very’	[t ap] ‘very’	

Table 3

As the writer observed further, there are some phonological processes occurred when the words undergo process of metathesis. So, it does not only change the segment's order, but this metathesis phenomenon also sometimes

changes the way of pronouncing the words. The further explanation of each process is shown below.

#### 4.2.1 Metathesis with Consonant Deletion

Consonant deletion is a process where a segment is deleted due to some circumstances. Consonant deletion usually occurs in everyday rapid speech in many languages. According to the table 3 above, it is different from what it is usually found. However, in this phenomenon, a consonant is deleted because the words are inverted.

[	1	u	c	u	]
	1	2	3	4	5
[	Ø	u	c		1]
	5	4	3	2	1

The sentence example of the word above can be seen below:

Speaker A : “*Liat dong gue dikasih ini sama doi*”.

“Hey look! He gave me this”

Speaker B : “*Ih **ucul** banget*”

“How cute!”

The words [uc l], [ t p], [alɪg] and [apul] are included in metathesis with consonant deletion because the glottal stop sound which appears in the spoken language is deleted when the words are inverted. The [ ] itself is actually not included on the written words *lucu*, *bete*, *gila*, and *lupa*. The other example is the word [bisa ] becomes [sabi].

Example one:

Speaker A : “*Lo bisanya kapan Shik?*”

“When will you have time, Shik?”

Speaker B : “*Ya pokoknya si kapan aja bisa mo minggu depan juga **sabi-sabi** aja kok gapapa*”.

I can join anytime even next week, I am always available.

Example two:

Speaker C : “**Sabi** kali main kesini”.

“You can chill here!”

[	b	ɪ	s	a	ʔ	]
	1	2	3	4	5	
	[	s	a	b	ɪ	]
		3	4	1	2	

Although the inverting pattern is different from the previous example, the word [sabɪ] is also included in metathesis with consonant deletion because the glottal stop sound is dropped. The glottal stop itself is also actually not included in written word as the other examples above. Both *sabi* and *sabi-sabi* are pronounced without adding consonant glottal stop sound. So, it becomes [sabɪ] and [sabɪ-sabɪ]

There are some unique cases about [sabɪ]. If the word *sabi* is followed by other words like *kali*, *lah*, *aja*, and *sih*, the word *sabi* itself will be pronounced as [sabɪ] even the word is repeated. On the other hand, it will be included in another phonological process if the word stands alone or it is repeated but it is not followed by other word. The explanation of this pattern will is explained below.

#### 4.2.2 Metathesis with Consonant Insertion (Epenthesis)

Consonant insertion or epenthesis is a process of adding a phoneme or consonant in an utterance by the speaker. In this analysis, the writer also finds consonant insertion on the word *sabi* and its repetition.

Example one:

Speaker A : “*Nih pizza buat kalian*”.

“I have pizza for all of you”.

Speaker B : “*Wah sabi-sabi*”.

“Cool!”.

Example two:

Speaker C : “*Minggu depan Jogja yuk*”.

“Let’s go to Jogja next week”.

Speaker D : “***Sabi***”.

“That’s a good idea”.

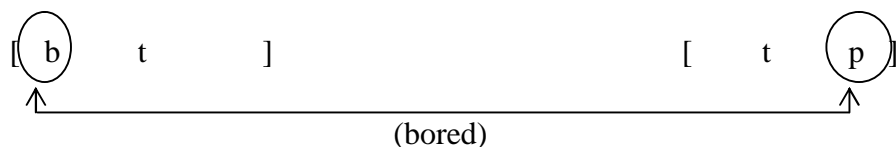
The word *sabi-sabi* is pronounced as [sabr̥-sabr̥ʔ] while the word *sabi* is pronounced [sabr̥ʔ]. The examples above show that if the words are repeated and it is not followed by other words, the first word will not be added by glottal stop sound but the second word will. For the second example, if the word *sabi* stands alone, the glottal stop sound is added when the speaker use it in a conversation to make it becomes closed syllable.

#### 4.2.3 Metathesis with Neutralization

Neutralization is a process where a sound is changed because of its environment. In this case, it is a process of neutralizing voiced and voiceless segments into voiceless only. The examples are:

- Speaker A : “*Lo kenapa dah?*”.  
 “What happen to you?”.
- Speaker B : “*Tugas gue banyak banget anjir, eteb gue*”.  
 “I have a lot of tasks to do, I’m screwed”.

Although the words above seem natural, there is a consonant neutralization process when the words are produced by the JABOTABEK teenagers. The origin words of the words above are *bete* (bored / screwed).



The [b] sound becomes [p] when the word are inverted which make the consonant [b] stand in the final position. In the daily conversation, consonant [b] naturally becomes [p] in the Indonesian language when it is occurred in the final position. It also happens to the Indonesian slang language which undergoes process of metathesis. The other example of this consonant neutralization process that the writer finds is the word [ba t] becomes [t ap]. It has the same process of neutralization with the word [b t] becomes [ t p].

#### 4.2.4 Metathesis with Vowel Reduction

The articulation of vowels may move from unstressed vowel to schwa or a more central position vowel. This process is called as vowel reduction. Vowel reduction is one of phonological processes appeared in Indonesian words that is undergoing process of metathesis as the focus of this analysis. The examples of the words are as followed:

- a. The sound [o] on the word *gue* [œé] becomes [ʊ] when that word are changed into *eug* [eʊk].

[ œ é ]      [ e ʊ k ]      “I”

- b. The sound [u] on the word *yuk* [u ] becomes [ ] when that word are changed into *kuy* [k ].

[ u ]      [k u ]      “Let’s go”

- c. The sound [e] on the word *bebas* [bebas] becomes [ ] when that word are changed into *sabeb* [sab p].

[be b a s]      [s a b ə p]      “whatever”

The bold sounds on the left are changed into a more central position when they are inverted. Therefore, those sound become shorter, softer and less clear.

#### 4.2.5 Metathesis with Apocope

Apocope is a process where a final unstressed vowel is dropped. Unstressed vowel is the vowel sound appeared in unstressed part of the word. The metathesis word that is included in this process is *mangats* [m ats] from the word *semangat* [s m at] (cheer up).

[ s<sup>9</sup> m      a t ]      [ m      a t s Ø ]

The unstressed vowel [ ] sound in the word *semangat* is dropped when the word is modified. Again, this word also proves that the JABOTABEK teenagers tend to modify the original words into metathesis words with closed syllable.

They delete the [ ] sound after consonant [s] so it makes the word *mangats* becomes a word with two closed syllable that are [t] and [s].

#### 4.3 The Reasons Behind Metathesis's Usage

The reasons behind this metathesis process in JABOTABEK area are found after the writer interviewed some people who have been contributed in this research. The writer has grouped the answers from JABOTABEK participants and it turns out that there are three reasons behind the use of metathesis process in Indonesian slang language.

First, it is because there have been a word that they use for a long time like *selow* which becomes *woles*. The word *selow* is a loanword from the English word of slow. The meanings of these two words are different. In Indonesian, *selow* means relax or *santai*. Also, because they live in an environment where people start using and creating the metathesis of the Indonesian language words, they naturally use it when they communicate with each other.

The second reason is they want to create a secret word or code to communicate with their friends in order to make the other people (who do not belong to JABOTABEK people) cannot understand their conversation. This is commonly used to talk about the other people weakness, for example when they want to say that the girl beside them is ugly or fussy. They will say *liat deh itu orang kelej banget* than *liat deh itu orang jelek banget* and *gila tebir banget dia* than *gila ribet banget dia*. Therefore, the one whom they are referring to cannot understand their conversation and also, it does not hurt her or the other person's feeling.

The last reason is because they want to see themselves as *gaul* kids. They always want to be up-to-date people, the same goes to JABOTABEK teenagers. They create a new word by inverting the original word and use it in daily conversation. Those who use this metathesis words want to tell the other people or their friends that they know and understand the words so the listeners assume that they are *gaul* kids. Moreover, they feel more confident when they are in a conversation between JABOTABEK teenagers if they use Indonesian slang language, including metathesis.

## 5. Conclusion

In the analysis, the writer found that there are two types of metatheses created by JABOTABEK teenagers, complete metathesis and partial metathesis. Complete metathesis or metathesis type one is a process of metathesis which inverts the segments from behind to the front within a word. They simply reverse the words. On the other hand, partial metathesis or metathesis type two is a metathesis process switching one or more segments within a word. It may change the consonant from the middle position into the end of the word, switch the position of the first two segments, change between syllables, and alter the consonant or vowel segment.

There are also phonological processes which occurred when the words undergo process of metathesis in Indonesian slang language. Based on the Schane's theory, the writer finds that the process of syllable structure consist of consonant deletion and consonant insertion, weakening and strengthening process consist of apocope and vowel reduction, and the process of neutralization consist of consonant neutralization. There is no assimilation process found when the words are modified into metathesis words in Indonesian slang language.

In addition, to make this research more valuable, the writer makes predictions of how to form a new word by using metathesis theory. The terms are first, the replacement words cannot be used if it is form an already existing word which has its own meaning; second, the replaced word must be pronounced easily and third, there is a possibility that it can be used by other speakers.

There are three major reasons behind the use of metathesis process in Indonesian slang language. First, the occurrence of the word *woles* (relax) from the original word *selow* (relax) makes the JABOTABEK teenagers modify the other words by changing one or more segments within a word. They use it in their daily conversation because of their environment. They live in the area where people around their age use metathesis words. Second, they want to make a code in order to make the other people outside JABOTABEK cannot understand their conversation because sometimes they take advantage by using this metathesis words to insult people. Third, they use this metathesis words because they want other people to think that they are *gaulkids* or *orgaul*.



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